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(54) **METHOD TO OPTIMIZE SUBSTRATE THICKNESS FOR IMAGE SENSOR DEVICE**

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
H01L 21/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **257/431**

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 257/431, 257/414, E27.131, E27.132; 438/68

See application file for complete search history.

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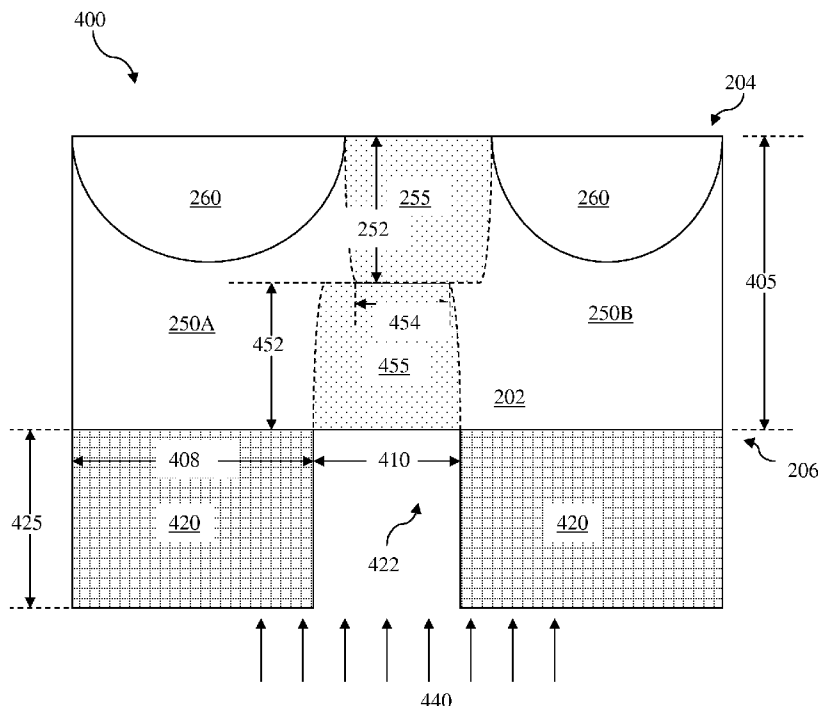
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Provided is a method for fabricating an image sensor device that includes providing a substrate having a front side and a back side; patterning a photoresist on the front side of the substrate to define an opening having a first width, the photoresist having a first thickness correlated to the first width; performing an implantation process through the opening using an implantation energy correlated to the first thickness thereby forming a first doped isolation feature; forming a light sensing feature adjacent to the first doped isolation feature, the light sensing feature having a second width; and thinning the substrate from the back side so that the substrate has a second thickness that does not exceed twice a depth of the first doped isolation feature. A pixel size is substantially equal to the first and second widths.

20 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets



100 ↗

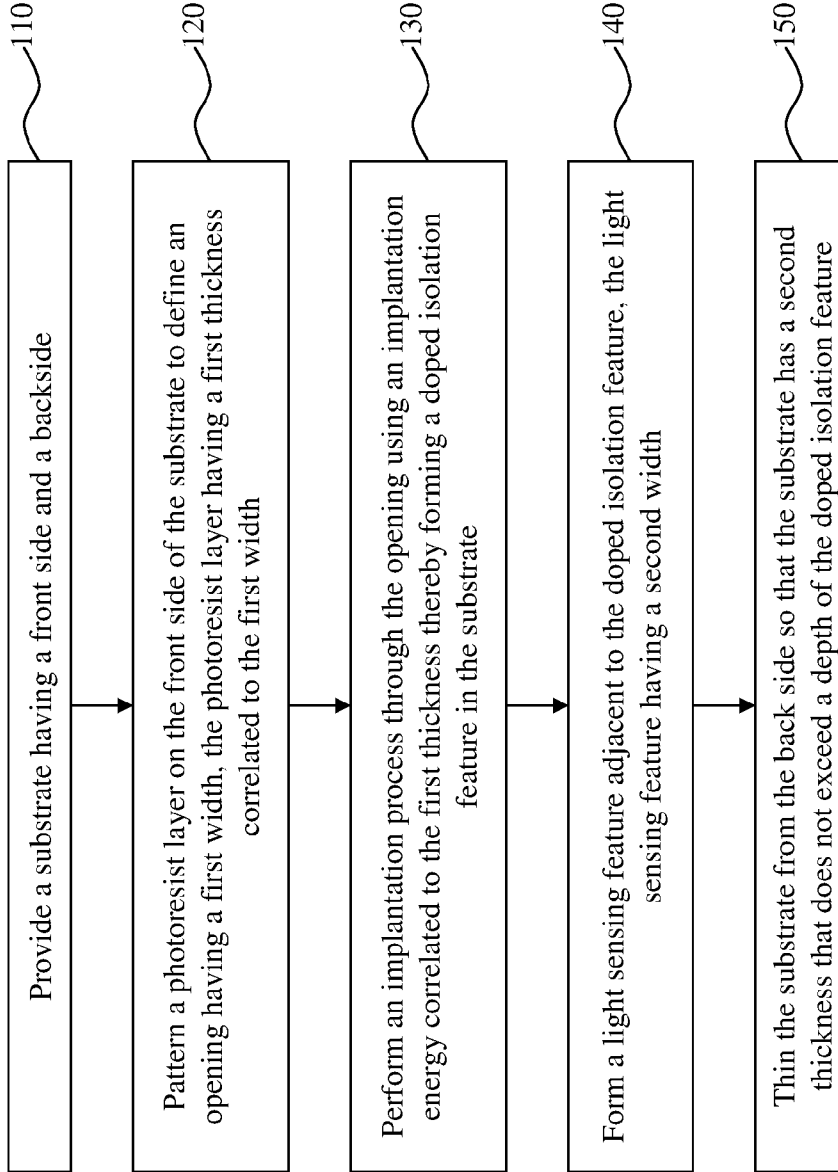


Fig. 1

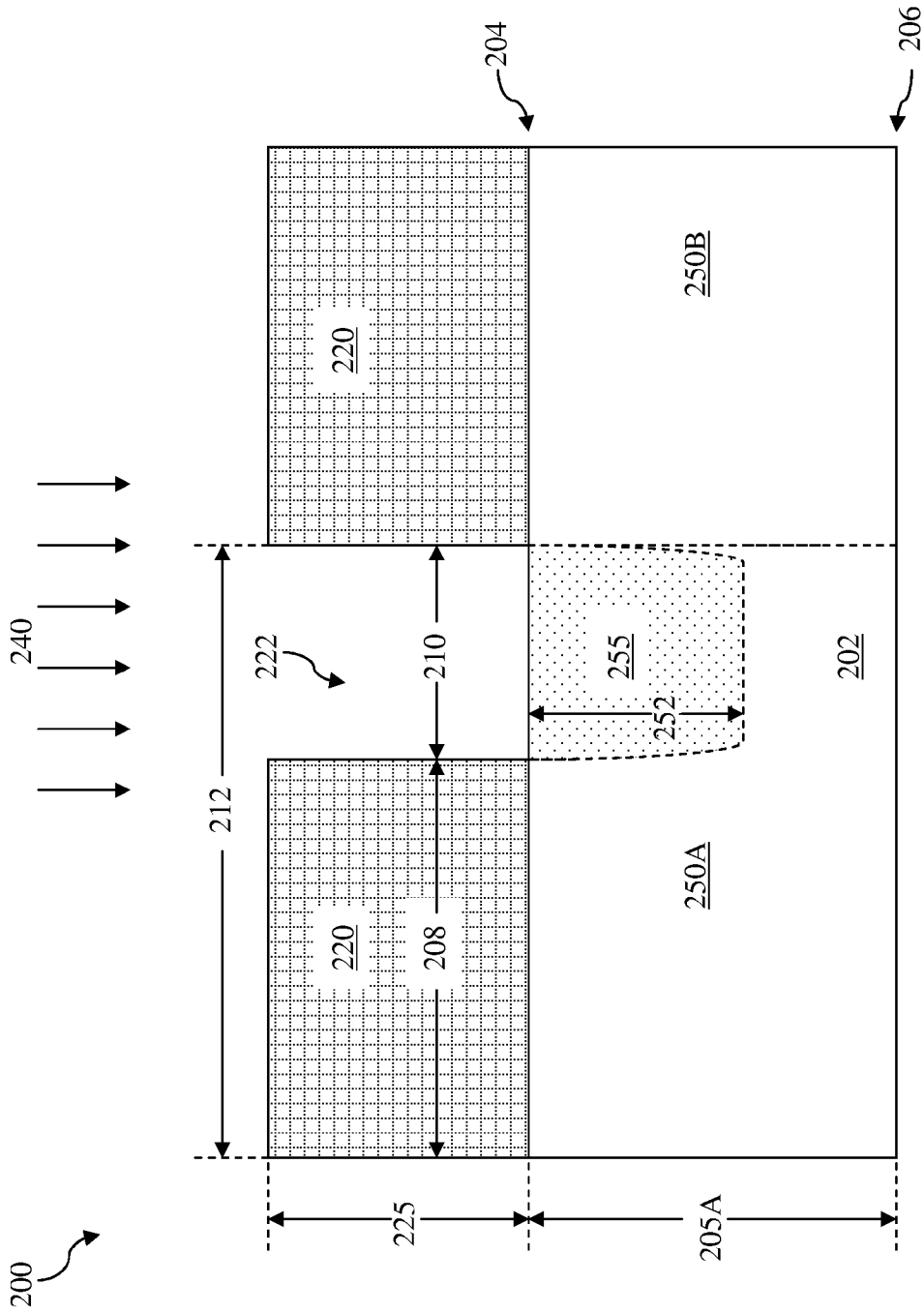


Fig. 2A

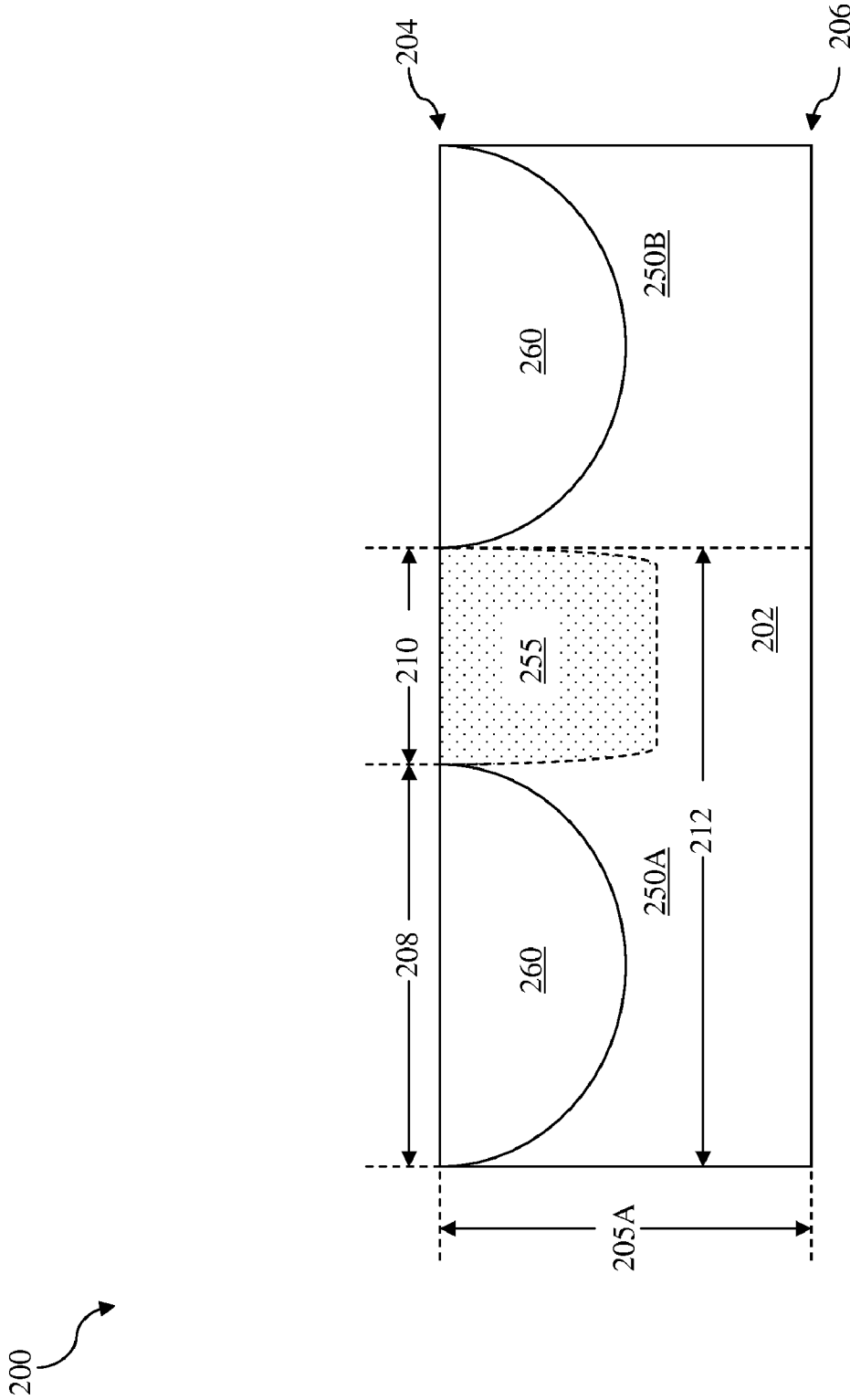


Fig. 2B

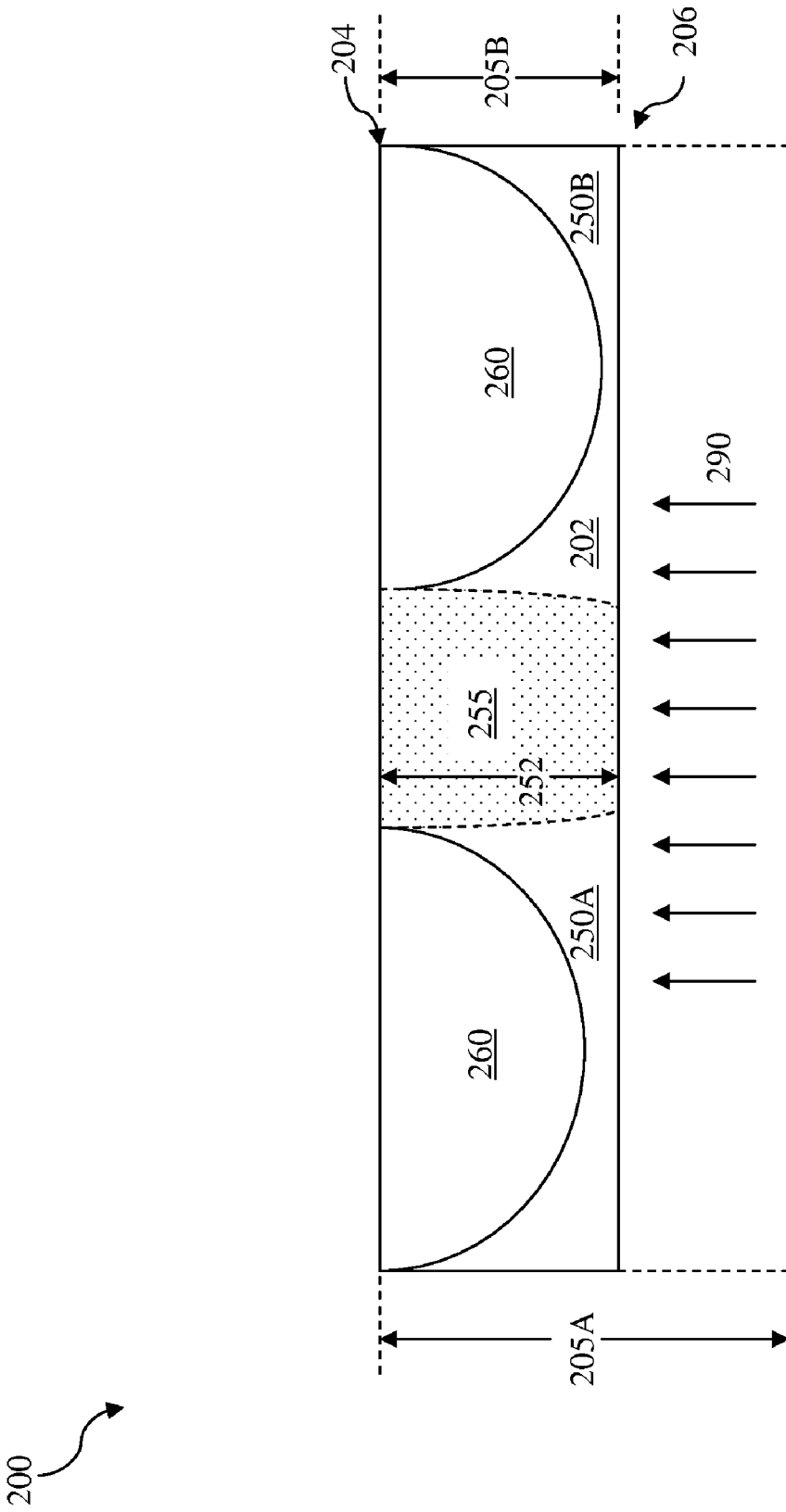


Fig. 2C

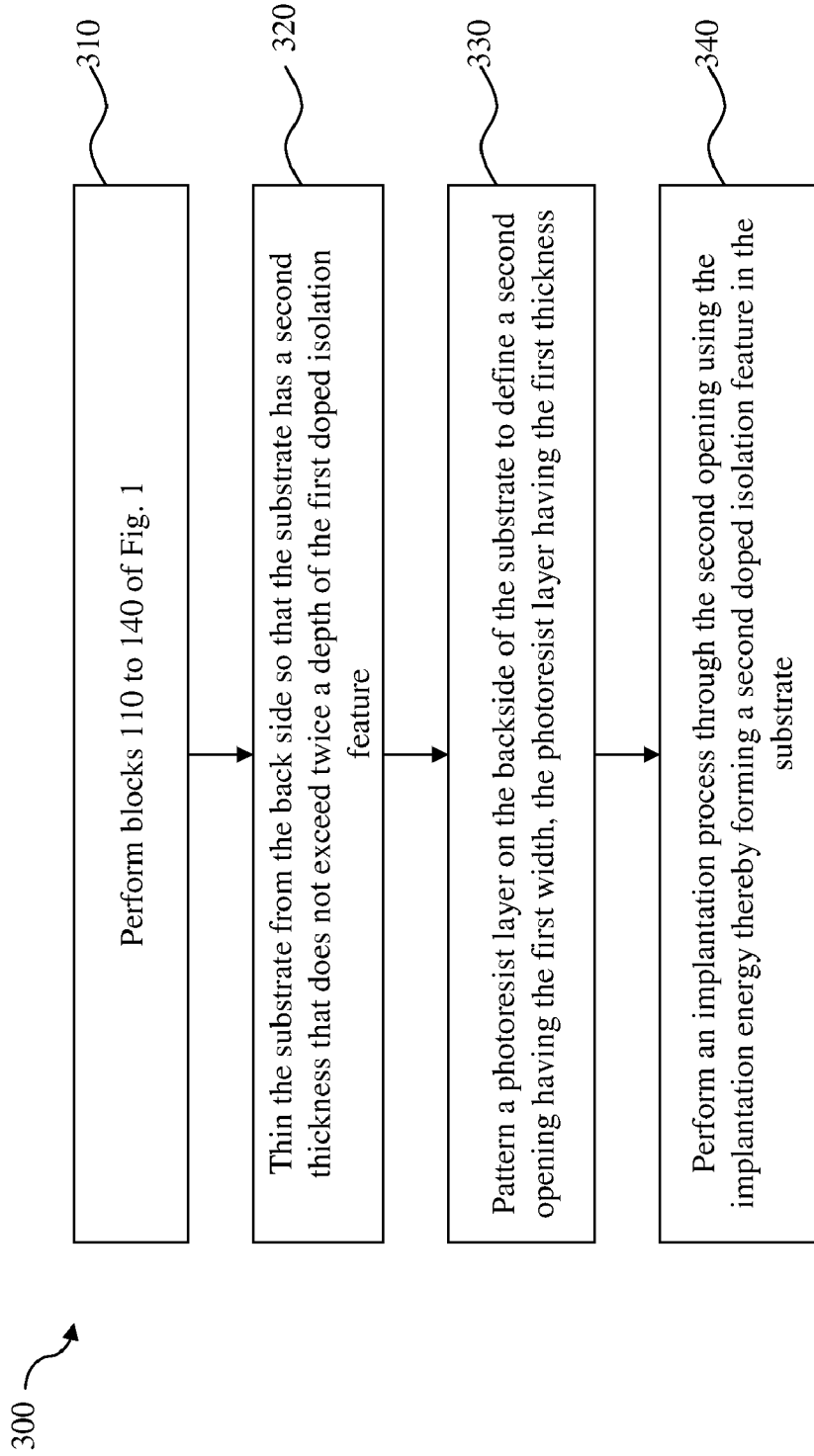


Fig. 3

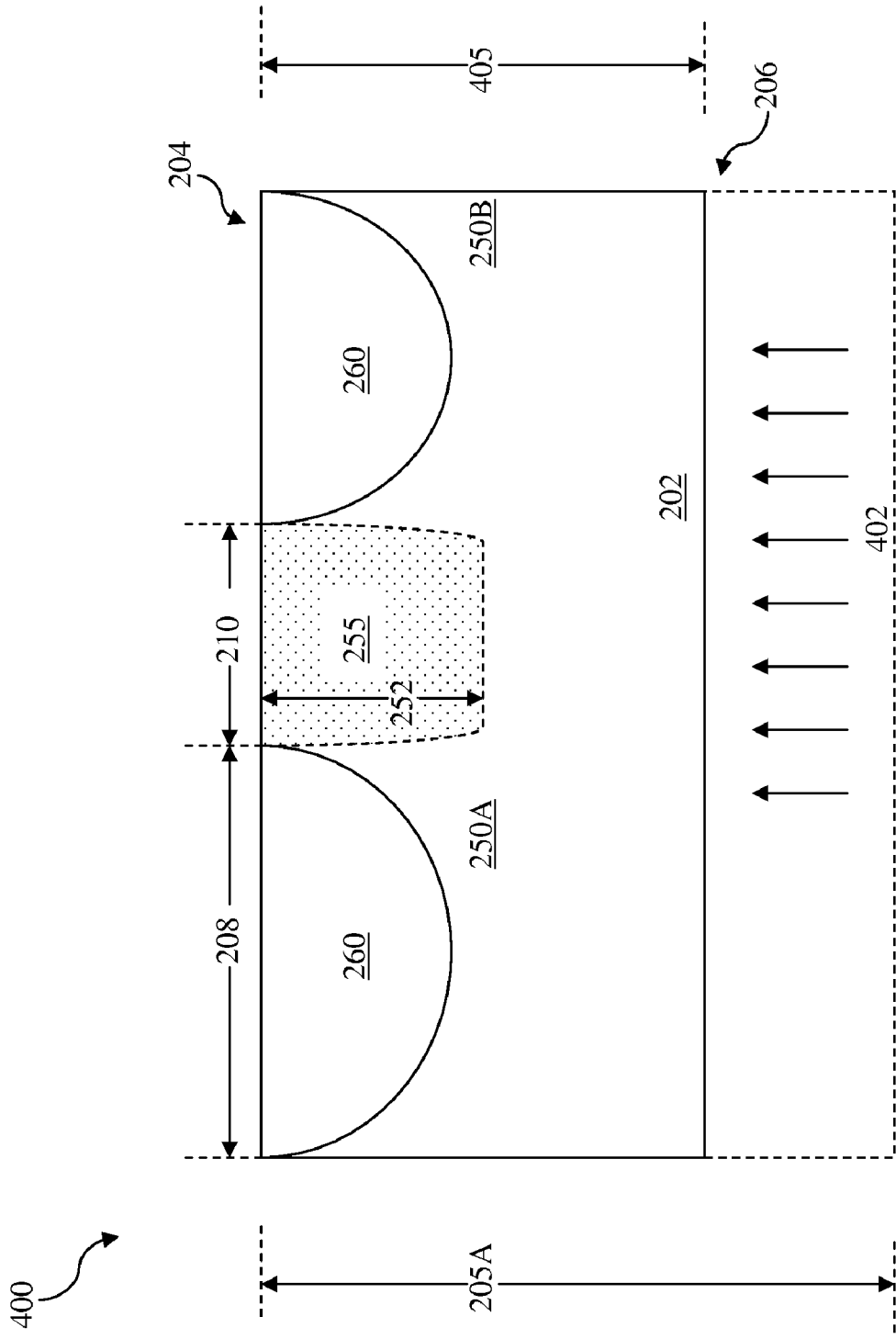


Fig. 4A

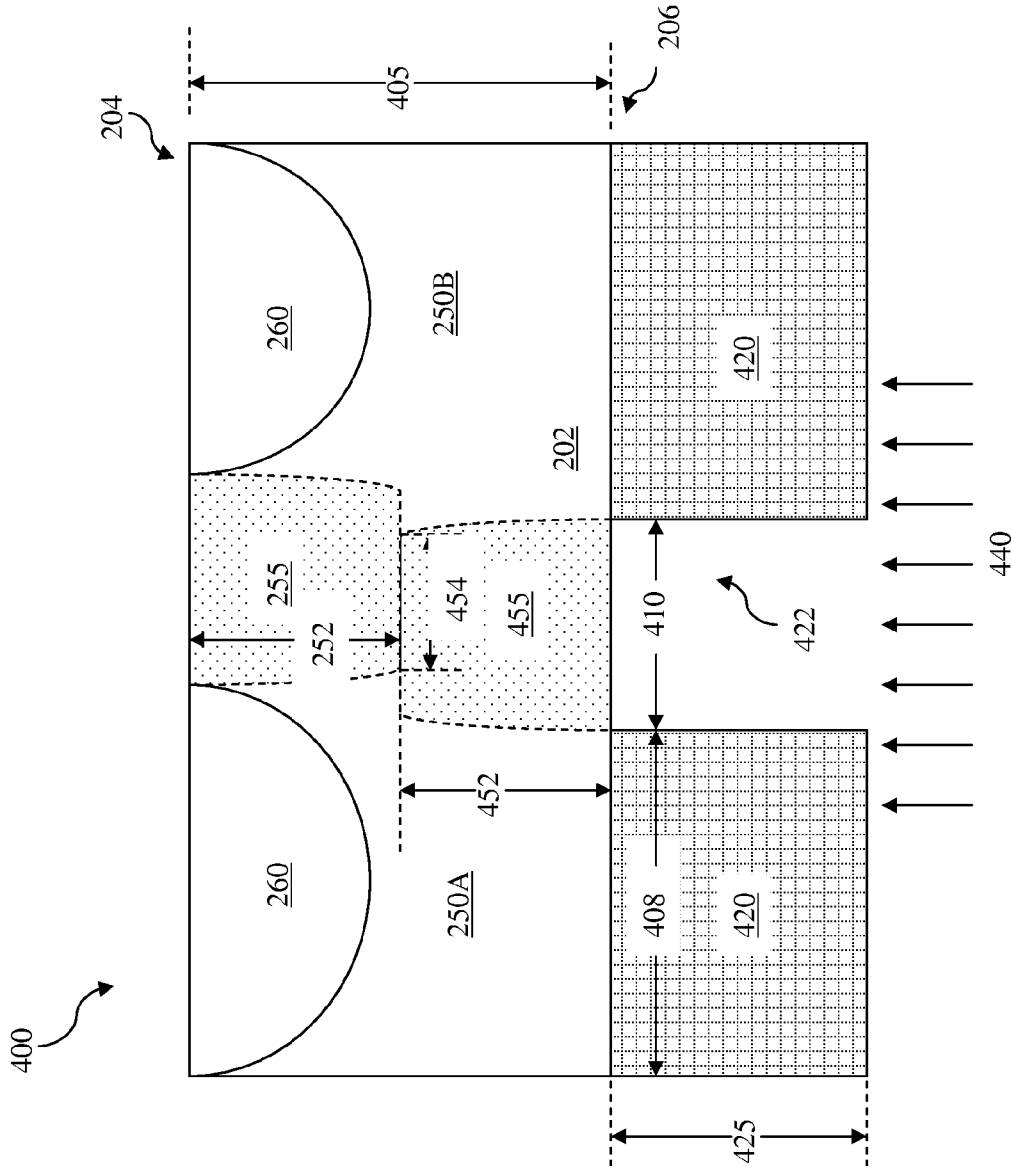


Fig. 4B

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METHOD TO OPTIMIZE SUBSTRATE THICKNESS FOR IMAGE SENSOR DEVICE

PRIORITY DATA

This application claims priority to application Ser. No. 12/371,146, filed on Feb. 13, 2009, entitled "METHOD TO OPTIMIZE SUBSTRATE THICKNESS FOR IMAGE SENSOR DEVICE," the entire disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND

In semiconductor technologies, an image sensor provides a grid of pixels, such as photosensitive diodes or photodiodes, reset transistors, source follower transistors, pinned layer photodiodes, and/or transfer transistors for recording an intensity or brightness of light. The pixel responds to the light by accumulating a charge—the more light, the higher the charge. The charge can then be used by another circuit so that a color and brightness can be used for a suitable application, such as a digital camera. Common types of pixel grids include a charge-coupled device (CCD) or complimentary metal oxide semiconductor (CMOS) image sensor (CIS). Back-side illuminated image sensors are used for sensing a volume of exposed light projected towards the backside surface of a substrate. The pixels are located on a front side of the substrate, and the substrate is thin enough so that light projected towards the backside of the substrate can reach the pixels. Back-side illuminated sensors provide a high fill factor and reduced destructive interference, as compared to front-side illuminated sensors.

However, image sensor devices suffer from "cross-talk." That is, light targeted for one image sensor element (and the electrical signal generated thereby) may spread to neighboring image sensor elements, which causes cross-talk. Cross-talk will degrade spatial resolution, reduce overall optical sensitivity, and result in poor color separation. As device sizes continue to get scaled down, pixel sizes continue to shrink as well, which may exacerbate problems such as cross-talk.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Aspects of the present disclosure are best understood from the following detailed description when read with the accompanying figures. It is emphasized that, in accordance with the standard practice in the industry, various features are not drawn to scale. In fact, the dimensions of the various features may be arbitrarily increased or reduced for clarity of discussion.

FIG. 1 is a flowchart illustrating a method of fabricating an image sensor device according to various aspects of the present disclosure;

FIGS. 2A to 2C are cross-sectional views of an image sensor device at various stages of fabrication according to the method of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a flowchart illustrating an alternative method of fabricating an image sensor device according to various aspects of an alternative embodiment; and

FIGS. 4A to 4B are cross-sectional views of an image sensor device at various stages of fabrication according to the method of FIG. 3.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

It is to be understood that the following disclosure provides many different embodiments, or examples, for implementing

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different features of the invention. Specific examples of components and arrangements are described below to simplify the present disclosure. These are, of course, merely examples and are not intended to be limiting. Moreover, the formation of a first feature over or on a second feature in the description that follows may include embodiments in which the first and second features are formed in direct contact, and may also include embodiments in which additional features may be formed interposing the first and second features, such that the first and second features may not be in direct contact. Various features may be arbitrarily drawn in different scales for simplicity and clarity.

Illustrated in FIG. 1 is a flowchart of a method 100 for fabricating an image sensor device according to various aspects of the present disclosure. FIGS. 2A to 2C are cross-sectional views of one embodiment of an image sensor device 200 at various stages of fabrication according to the method 100 of FIG. 1. The image sensor device 200 includes a grid or array of pixels for sensing and recording an intensity of light radiation. The image sensor device 200 may include a charge-coupled device (CCD), complimentary metal oxide semiconductor (CMOS) image sensor (CIS), an active-pixel sensor (APS), and a passive-pixel sensor. The image sensor device 200 further includes additional circuitry and input/outputs that are provided adjacent to the grid of pixels for providing an operation environment for the pixels and for supporting external communications with the pixels. It is understood that FIGS. 2A to 2C have been simplified for a better understanding of the inventive concepts of the present disclosure.

Referring to FIG. 1, the method 100 begins with block 110 in which a substrate having a front side and a backside is provided. Referring also to FIG. 2A, the image sensor device 200 includes a semiconductor substrate 202 having a front side 204 and a backside 206. In the present embodiment, the substrate 202 is a silicon substrate doped with a P-type dopant such as boron (e.g., P-type substrate). In another embodiment, the substrate 202 is a silicon substrate doped with an N-type dopant such as phosphorous (e.g., N-type substrate). In other embodiments, the substrate 202 includes other elementary semiconductors such as germanium and diamond. Alternatively, the substrate 202 may include a compound semiconductor and/or an alloy semiconductor. Further, the substrate 202 may optionally include an epitaxial layer (epi layer), may be strained for performance enhancement, and may include a silicon-on-insulator (SOI) structure. The substrate 202 also has an initial thickness 205A that ranges from about 100 um to about 3000 um. In the present embodiment, the initial thickness 205A is about 700 um.

The method 100 continues with block 120 in which a photoresist is patterned on the front side of the substrate to define an opening having a first width, the photoresist has a first thickness correlated to the first width. A photoresist layer is formed on the front side 204 of the substrate 202. The photoresist layer is then patterned by a lithography process to form a mask layer 220 that includes an opening 222. For example, the lithography process may use a photomask and a positive photoresist material for the mask layer 220. The mask layer 220 has a width 208, and the opening 222 has a width 210. The mask layer 220 is used to form a doped isolation structure disposed between pixels 250A and 250B in the substrate 202. In the present embodiment, the pixels 250A, 250B each has a pixel size 212 that is approximately equal to a sum of the widths 208 and 210.

A relationship between the pixel size and an optimized substrate thickness can be determined based on a design rule of a doped isolation feature. For example, the design rule includes a minimum photoresist width (such as width 208)

that is formed by the lithography process, a minimum exposure width (such as width **210**) of the lithography process, a minimum photoresist thickness (such as thickness **255** discussed below) for resisting an implantation energy used to form the doped isolation feature, and an effective implant depth (such as depth **252** discussed below) of the implantation energy. It should be noted that the relationship may include other factors that effect the formation of the doped isolation feature such as type of dopants used. The doped isolation feature is designed to have a minimum width to reduce the impact on sensitivity while having sufficient depth to reduce cross-talk between adjacent pixels. Accordingly, the optimized substrate thickness is correlated and derived from the depth of the doped isolation feature. The depth of the doped isolation feature will depend on whether an implantation process is performed to the front side of the substrate (in FIG. **1**), or to the front side and the backside of the substrate (in FIG. **3**). The optimized substrate thickness represents a maximum thickness that the substrate should have after it has been thinned-down from the backside. Thus, the doped isolation feature is designed to substantially extend from the front side to the backside of the substrate to reduce cross talk between adjacent pixels. The various parameters and specifications of the image sensor device **200** are determined from the relationship between the pixel size and the optimized substrate thickness as discussed below.

The pixel size **212** is set to a pre-defined pixel size by design requirements provided by a design engineer or customer. As noted above, the widths **208** and **210** are correlated with each other since their sum is approximately equal to the pixel size **212**. Hence, an optimization algorithm may be used to determine (or set) the widths **208** and **210**. In the present embodiment, the optimization algorithm includes a ratio between the widths **208** and **210**, specifically, width **208**/width **210**. The ratio is equal to about 11/7 (about 1.571). It has been observed that the mask layer **220** has a thickness **225** that is correlated to the width **210** of the opening **222** and to the width **208** of the mask layer. In the present embodiment, the thickness **225** is about 5.5 times the width **210**, and is about 3.5 times the width **208**. These values may be determined experimentally with a particular lithography process, and may include a range of values so as to form a suitable and acceptable pattern for the implantation process. At this point, the widths **208** and **210** and the thickness **225** can be derived for a range of pixel sizes **212** specified by various design requirements. It has been observed that a light sensing ele-

ment having a width substantially equal to the width **208** and the doped isolation feature having a width substantially equal to the width **210** results in an image pixel having an optimized light sensitivity and reduction in cross-talk with adjacent pixels.

To illustrate, refer to Table 1 below. Table 1 lists exemplary values for the present embodiment using boron as a dopant to form the isolation feature below the opening **222** (doping will be discussed in detail later). Starting from the left, column A includes a list of pixel sizes **212**. As previously mentioned, the pixel size **212** is specified by design requirements. Column B includes the optimization algorithm (which is a ratio in the present embodiment) for each pixel size **212**. Also note that the optimization ratio remains the same for all values of the pixel size **212** for the present embodiment. Column C lists values of width **208** corresponding to each pixel size **212** and the optimization algorithm. Column D lists values of width **210** corresponding to each pixel size **212** and the optimization algorithm. In other words, the design requirements and the optimization algorithm specify two equations and two variables. The two variables are the widths **208** and **210**. The two equations are: pixel size **212**=width **208**+width **210**; and the optimization algorithm (or ratio)=width **208**/width **210**=1.571. Using these two equations, the two variables (widths **208** and **210**) are solved. As an example, when the pixel size **212** is specified to be about 0.701 μm by design requirements, and using an optimization algorithm (or ratio) of about 1.571, the width **208** and the width **210** are calculated to be about 0.429 μm and 0.273 μm , respectively.

Column E includes a list of values for the thickness **225** of the photoresist layer **220**. As mentioned above, the thickness **225** is about 5.5 times the width **210**, or about 3.5 times the width **208**. Hence, once the width **210** is determined by the calculations above, the thickness **225** is determined for each pixel size **212** as well. For example, when the pixel size is about 0.701 μm , the width **210** of the opening **222** is calculated to be about 0.273 μm , and the thickness **225** of the photoresist layer **220** is calculated to be about $5.5 \times 0.273 \mu\text{m} = 1.5 \mu\text{m}$. Columns F to I will be discussed in more detail below. Also, Table 2 is shown after Table 1. Table 2 lists exemplary values for an alternative embodiment using phosphorus as a dopant to form the isolation feature. Note that although the optimization ratio is shown to be about 1.571 in both Table 1 and Table 2, it may vary in other embodiments. For example, the optimization ratio may range between 1.25 and 1.85 in other embodiments.

TABLE 1

Using boron as a dopant to form an isolation feature								
Column A Pixel size 212 (μm)	Column B Optimization algorithm (ratio of width 208 to width 210)	Column C Width 208 of mask 220 (μm)	Column D Width 210 of opening 222 (μm)	Column E Thickness 225 of photoresist layer (μm)	Column F Implant energy (KeV)	Column G Effective implant depth 252, 452 (μm)	Column H Substrate thickness 205B with front side implant (μm)	Column I Substrate thickness 405 with front and back side implant (μm)
0.7013	1.5714286	0.42857	0.2727	1.50	500	1.28	1.28	2.56
0.87429	1.5714286	0.53429	0.34	1.87	600	1.43	1.43	2.86
0.98182	1.5714286	0.6	0.3818	2.10	700	1.56	1.56	3.12
1.02857	1.5714286	0.62857	0.4	2.20	800	1.68	1.68	3.36
1.12208	1.5714286	0.68571	0.4364	2.40	900	1.81	1.81	3.62
1.21558	1.5714286	0.74286	0.4727	2.60	1000	1.92	1.92	3.84
1.26234	1.5714286	0.77143	0.4909	2.70	1100	2.03	2.03	4.06
1.4026	1.5714286	0.85714	0.5455	3.00	1200	2.15	2.15	4.3
1.51948	1.5714286	0.92857	0.5909	3.25	1300	2.26	2.26	4.52
1.54286	1.5714286	0.94286	0.6	3.30	1400	2.36	2.36	4.72

TABLE 1-continued

Using boron as a dopant to form an isolation feature								
Column A Pixel size 212 (um)	Column B Optimization algorithm (ratio of width 208 to width 210)	Column C Width 208 of mask 220 (um)	Column D Width 210 of opening 222 (um)	Column E Thickness 225 of photoresist layer (um)	Column F Implant energy (KeV)	Column G Effective implant depth 252, 452 (um)	Column H Substrate thickness 205B with front side implant (um)	Column I Substrate thickness 405 with front and back side implant (um)
1.58961	1.5714286	0.97143	0.6182	3.40	1500	2.47	2.47	4.94
1.65974	1.5714286	1.01429	0.6455	3.55	1600	2.57	2.57	5.14
1.68312	1.5714286	1.02857	0.6545	3.60	1700	2.68	2.68	5.36
1.82338	1.5714286	1.11429	0.7091	3.90	1800	2.79	2.79	5.58
1.96364	1.5714286	1.2	0.7636	4.20	2000	2.99	2.99	5.98
2.1039	1.5714286	1.28571	0.8182	4.50	2250	3.26	3.26	6.52
2.33766	1.5714286	1.42857	0.9091	5.00	2500	3.51	3.51	7.02

TABLE 2

Using phosphorous as a dopant to form an isolation feature								
Column A Pixel size 212 (um)	Column B Optimization algorithm (ratio of width 208 to width 210)	Column C Width 208 of mask 220 (um)	Column D Width 210 of opening 222 (um)	Column E Thickness 225 of photoresist layer (um)	Column F Implantation energy (KeV)	Column G Effective implant depth 252, 352 (um)	Column H Substrate thickness 205B with front side implant (um)	Column I Substrate thickness 405 with front and back side implant (um)
0.6545	1.5714286	0.4	0.25455	1.40	500	0.75	0.75	1.5
0.6779	1.5714286	0.41429	0.26364	1.45	600	0.87	0.87	1.74
0.7013	1.5714286	0.42857	0.27273	1.50	700	0.98	0.98	1.96
0.7294	1.5714286	0.44571	0.28364	1.56	800	1.08	1.08	2.16
1.0286	1.5714286	0.62857	0.4	2.20	900	1.18	1.18	2.36
1.0519	1.5714286	0.64286	0.40909	2.25	1000	1.27	1.27	2.54
1.0753	1.5714286	0.65714	0.41818	2.30	1100	1.35	1.35	2.7
1.0987	1.5714286	0.67143	0.42727	2.35	1200	1.43	1.43	2.86
1.1221	1.5714286	0.68571	0.43636	2.40	1300	1.50	1.50	3
1.1455	1.5714286	0.7	0.44545	2.45	1400	1.57	1.57	3.14
1.1688	1.5714286	0.71429	0.45455	2.50	1500	1.64	1.64	3.28
1.1922	1.5714286	0.72857	0.46364	2.55	1600	1.71	1.71	3.42
1.2156	1.5714286	0.74286	0.47273	2.60	1700	1.77	1.77	3.54
1.239	1.5714286	0.75714	0.48182	2.65	1800	1.83	1.83	3.66
1.2623	1.5714286	0.77143	0.49091	2.70	2000	1.95	1.95	3.9
1.3325	1.5714286	0.81429	0.51818	2.85	2250	2.08	2.08	4.16
1.4494	1.5714286	0.88571	0.56364	3.10	2500	2.22	2.22	4.44
1.5429	1.5714286	0.94286	0.6	3.30	2750	2.35	2.35	4.7
1.6364	1.5714286	1	0.63636	3.50	3000	2.46	2.46	4.92

The method **100** continues with block **130** in which an implantation process using an implantation energy correlated to the first thickness is performed through the opening, thereby forming a doped isolation feature in the substrate. An implantation process **240** is performed to the substrate **202** through the opening **222**, while the mask **220** resists the implantation energy and protects a portion of the substrate below the mask **220**. The implantation process **240** uses boron as a dopant in the present embodiment. In an alternative embodiment, the implantation process **240** uses phosphorous as a dopant. The implantation process **240** also has an implantation energy that is correlated with the thickness **225** of the mask layer **220**. In the present embodiment, the implantation energy of the implantation process **240** is a maximum amount of implantation energy that can be tolerated (or effectively blocked) by the mask **220** having the thickness **225**. Referring to Table 1 above for an illustration of the present embodiment using boron as a dopant, Column F lists a range of values for

the implantation energy. An implantation energy of 500 KeV correlates to the thickness **225** of the photoresist layer **220** having a value of 1.5 um. Note that the implantation energy of 500 KeV also correlates to a pixel size **212** of 0.701 um. It can be observed that, as the pixel size **212** ranges from about 0.701 um to about 2.338 um, the thickness **225** of the photoresist layer **220** ranges from about 1.5 um to about 5 um correspondingly, and the implantation energy of the implantation process **240** ranges from about 500 KeV to about 2500 KeV correspondingly.

Referring to Table 2 above for an illustration of an alternative embodiment using phosphorous as a dopant, the implantation energy is 500 KeV for the thickness **225** of the photoresist layer **220** having a value of 1.4 um. Note that the implantation energy of 500 KeV also correlates to a pixel size **212** of 0.655 um. It can be observed that, as the pixel size **212** ranges from about 0.655 um to about 1.636 um, the thickness **225** of the photoresist layer **220** ranges from about 1.4 um to about 3.5 um correspondingly, and the implantation energy of

the implantation process **240** ranges from about 500 KeV to about 3000 KeV correspondingly.

The implantation process **240** forms a doped isolation feature **255** below the opening **222**. In the present embodiment, the isolation feature **255** is substantially aligned with the opening **222**. Hence, the isolation feature **255** has a maximum width substantially equal to the width **210** of the opening **222**. The isolation feature **255** has an effective implant depth **252** that is also correlated with the implantation energy of the implantation process **240**. The effective implant depth **252** also varies depending on the type of dopant used for the implantation process **240**. Referring again to Table 1 for an illustration of the present embodiment using boron as a dopant, Column G lists a range of values for the effective implant depth **252**. An effective implant depth **252** of 1.28 μm correlates to an implantation energy of 500 KeV. Note that the effective implant depth **252** also correlates to a pixel size **212** of 0.701 μm . It can be observed that, as the pixel size **212** ranges from about 0.701 μm to about 2.338 μm , the implantation energy of the implantation process **240** ranges from about 500 KeV to about 2500 KeV correspondingly, and the effective implant depth **252** ranges from about 1.28 μm to about 3.51 μm correspondingly. Referring to Table 2 for an illustration of an alternative embodiment using phosphorous as a dopant, Column G lists a range of values for the effective implant depth **252**. An effective implant depth **252** of 0.75 μm correlates to an implantation energy of 500 KeV. Note that the effective implant depth **252** also correlates to a pixel size **212** of 0.655 μm . It can be observed that, as the pixel size **212** ranges from about 0.655 μm to about 1.636 μm , the implantation energy of the implantation process **240** ranges from about 500 KeV to about 3000 KeV correspondingly, and the effective implant depth **252** ranges from about 0.75 μm to about 2.46 μm correspondingly.

The method **100** continues with block **140** in which a light sensing feature adjacent to the doped isolation feature is formed, wherein the light sensing feature has a second width correlated to the first width. Referring to FIG. 2B, the mask layer **220** is removed. Thereafter, a light sensing feature **260** is formed in the front side **204** of the substrate **202** and adjacent to the doped isolation feature **255**. The light sensing feature **260** may be formed by a lithography process and a doping process. For example, the lithography process may use the same photomask in that was used to pattern the mask layer **220** except that a negative photoresist material is used instead of a positive photoresist material. In the present embodiment, the doping process uses an N-type dopant such as phosphorous to form the light sensing feature **260**. In an alternative embodiment, the doping process may optionally use a P-type dopant such as boron to form the light sensing feature. In both embodiments, the light sensing feature **260** has a maximum width that is substantially equal to the width **208**. In the present embodiment, the light sensing feature **260** is operable to detect light radiation.

It should be noted that the light sensing features of pixels **250A**, **250B** can be varied from one another, such as having different junction depths, thicknesses, and so forth. Additionally, it should be noted that the exact sequence of forming the doped isolation features and light sensing features described above is not important. For example, the light sensing feature may be formed before or after forming the doped isolation feature. Further, it is understood that although the pixels **250A** and **250B** are generally illustrated as photodiodes for the sake of example, other pixels types may be implemented including pinned layer photodiodes, photogates, reset transistors, source follower transistors, and transfer transistors.

The method **100** continues with block **150** in which the substrate is thinned from the back side so that the substrate has a second thickness that does not exceed a depth of the doped isolation feature. Referring to FIG. 2C, the substrate **202** is thinned down by a thinning process **290** from the backside **206**. The thinning process **290** may include a grinding process, diamond scrubbing process, chemical-mechanical polishing (CMP) process, chemical etching, or other suitable techniques. A substantial amount of substrate material may be removed by the thinning process **290**, and the substrate **202** has a new thickness **205B**. In the present embodiment, the new thickness **205B** is the optimized substrate thickness correlated to the effective implant depth **252** of the isolation feature **255**.

Referring to Table 1 for an illustration of the present embodiment using boron as a dopant, Column H lists a range of values for the new thickness **205B** of the substrate **202** with only a front side implant to form the isolation feature **255**. As is shown by Table 1, the new thickness **205B** is substantially equal to the effective implant depth **252** in the present embodiment. It can be observed that, when the isolation feature **255** is formed by using boron as a dopant and with the specified implantation energy, the effective implant depth **252** ranges from about 1.28 μm to about 3.51 μm , and thus the new thickness **205B** of the substrate **202** ranges from about 1.28 μm to about 3.51 μm correspondingly. Similarly, when the isolation feature **255** is formed by using phosphorous as a dopant and with the specified implantation energy, the new thickness **205B** of the substrate **202** ranges from about 0.75 μm to about 2.46 μm as the effective implant depth **252** ranges from about 0.75 μm to about 2.46 μm . It should be noted that although Tables 1 and 2 show thickness **205B** (Column H) being substantially equal to the effective implant depth **252**, the thickness **205B** represents a maximum substrate thickness. Accordingly, the substrate **202** may be thinned down to a thickness that is less than the effective implant depth **252** in other embodiments. Thus, the isolation feature **255** substantially extends from the front side **204** to the backside **206** of the substrate **202** in the final device to effectively reduce cross-talk between the pixels **250A**, **250B**.

It should be noted that prior to thinning down the substrate **202**, various structures and features may be formed on the front side **204** of the substrate **202**. For example, an interconnect structure is formed on the front side **204** of the substrate **202**. The interconnect structure includes a plurality of patterned dielectric layers and metal layers that provide interconnections (e.g., wiring) between the various doped features, circuitry, and input/output of the image sensor device **200**. A buffer layer is formed on the interconnect structure. The buffer layer includes a dielectric material such as silicon oxide. Alternatively, the buffer layer may optionally include silicon nitride. The buffer layer is planarized to form a smooth surface by chemical mechanical polishing (CMP). A carrier substrate is bonded with the buffer layer so that processing the backside **206** of the substrate **202** can be performed. The carrier substrate may be similar to the substrate **202** and includes a silicon material. Alternatively, the carrier substrate may optionally include a glass substrate. The carrier substrate provides protection for the various features formed on the front side **204**, and also provides mechanical strength and support for processing the backside **206** of the substrate **202**.

Further, it is understood that the method **100** may continue with further processing to complete fabrication of the image sensor device **200**. For example, a color filter layer is formed over the back side **206** of the substrate **202**. The color filter layer can support different color filters (e.g., red, green, and blue), and may be positioned such that the incident light

radiation is directed thereon and there through. The color filter layer includes a color filter for filtering light radiation of a first wavelength to the pixel **250A** and a color filter for filtering light radiation of a second wavelength to the pixel **250B**. The color filter layer may include a dye-based (or pigment based) polymer or resin for filtering a specific wavelength band. A plurality of micro-lens is formed over the color filter layer for directing light radiation towards the pixels **250A** and **250B**. The micro-lens may be positioned in various arrangements and have various shapes depending on a refractive index of material used for the micro-lens and distance from the sensor surface.

Referring to FIG. 3, illustrated is a flowchart of an alternative method **300** of fabricating an image sensor device according to various aspects of the present disclosure. Referring also to FIGS. 4A to 4B, illustrated are cross-sectional views of an image sensor device **400** at various stages of fabrication according to the method **300** of FIG. 3. The image sensor device **400** is similar to the image sensor device **200** of FIG. 2 except that the implantation process is performed to both the front side and the backside of the substrate to form the isolation feature. Accordingly, similar features in FIGS. 2 and 4 are numbered the same for the sake of simplicity and clarity. Additionally, the method **300** includes processes that are performed in the method of FIG. 1 as discussed below.

The method **300** begins with block **310** in which the processes described in blocks **110** to **140** of the method **100** of FIG. 1 are performed. The image sensor device **400** includes the isolation feature **255** and the light sensing feature **260** formed in the front side **204** of the substrate **202**. The isolation feature **255** has a width **210** and a depth **252**, and the light sensing feature has a width **208** as specified in Table 1 and Table 2. The method **300** continues with block **320** in which the substrate is thinned from the backside so that the substrate has a second thickness that does not exceed twice a depth of the first doped isolation feature. A thinning process **402** (similar to the thinning process **290** of FIG. 2) is performed to thin the substrate **202** from the backside **206** so that the substrate has a new thickness **405**. The new thickness **405** is an optimized substrate thickness correlated to twice the effective implant depth **252** of the isolation feature **255**. An isolation feature subsequently formed in the backside **206** of the substrate **202** may have substantially the same depth as the isolation feature **255** formed in the front side **204**. Accordingly, the design provides a minimum pixel size (widths **208** and **210**) with a maximum substrate thickness ($2 \times \text{depth } 252$) for high sensitivity and low cross-talk.

Referring to Column I of Tables 1 and 2 for an illustration of the correlative relationship between the new thickness **405** of the thinned substrate **202** and the effective implant depth **252**. Table 1 illustrates that the new thickness **405** ranges from about 2.56 μm to about 7.02 μm corresponding to a range of the effective implant depth **252** from about 1.28 μm to about 3.51 μm , when the isolation feature **255** is formed by using boron as a dopant and with the specified implantation energy. Table 2 illustrates that the new thickness **405** ranges from about 1.5 μm to about 4.92 μm corresponding to a range of the effective implant depth **252** ranging from about 0.75 μm to about 2.46 μm , when the isolation feature **255** is formed by using phosphorous as a dopant and with the specified implantation energy. It should be noted that although Tables 1 and 2 show thickness **405** (Column I) being substantially equal to twice the effective implant depth **252**, the thickness **405** represents a maximum substrate thickness. Accordingly, the substrate **202** may be thinned down to a thickness that is less than twice the effective implant depth **252** in other embodiments. Thus, the isolation feature **255** formed in the front side **204**

and a subsequently formed isolation feature **455** formed in the backside **206** (discussed below) substantially extends from the front side **204** to the backside **206** of the substrate **202** in the final device to effectively reduce cross-talk between the pixels **250A**, **250B**.

The method **300** continues with block **330** in which a photoresist layer formed on the backside of the substrate is patterned to define a second opening having the first width, the photoresist layer having the first thickness. Referring now to FIG. 4B, a photoresist layer is patterned by a lithography process to form a mask layer **420** having an opening **422**. The mask layer **420** has a width **408** substantially equal to width **208** and a thickness **425** substantially equal to the thickness **225** of the photoresist layer **220**. The opening **422** has a width **410** substantially equal to the width **210** and is substantially aligned with the isolation feature **255**. However, there may be some acceptable range of misalignment as will be discussed below.

The method **300** continues with block **340** in which an implantation process is performed through the second opening using the implantation energy thereby forming a second doped isolation feature in the substrate. An implantation process **440** is then performed to the backside **206** of the substrate **202** to form a doped isolation feature **455**. The implantation energy is substantially the same as the implantation energy that was used to form isolation feature **255** as specified in Column F of Tables 1 and 2 and discussed above in FIG. 2. The doped isolation feature **455** includes a portion that overlaps with the doped isolation feature **255**. In the embodiment shown here, the overlap portion **454** is greater than 0.1 μm . The doped isolation feature **455** also has an effective implant depth **452** substantially equal to the effective implant depth **252** of the doped isolation feature **255**. Accordingly, the doped isolation features **255** and **455** substantially extends from the front side **204** to the backside **206** of the substrate **202**. The method **300** may continue with additional processing to complete fabrication of the image sensor device **400**. For example, the mask layer **420** may be removed, and color filters and micro-lenses may be formed on the backside **206** of the substrate **202** as discussed above in FIG. 2.

In summary, the methods and devices disclosed herein provide an effective and efficient approach for thinning-down a substrate to an optimized thickness for a given pixel size. The methods and devices disclosed herein take advantage of determining a relationship between the pixel size and substrate thickness based on an aggressive design rule for the doped isolation feature. The design rule takes in to account a minimum photoresist width that is formed by the lithography process, a minimum exposure width of the lithography process, a minimum photoresist thickness for resisting an implantation energy used to form the doped isolation feature, and an effective implant depth of the implantation energy. In some embodiments, the doped isolation feature is formed in the front side of the substrate. In other embodiments, the doped isolation is formed in front side of the substrate and in the backside of the substrate after thinning down the substrate. In doing so, the present embodiment offers several advantages over prior art devices, it being understood that different embodiments may have different advantages and that no particular advantage is necessarily required for all embodiments. One advantage of the present embodiment is that the doped isolation feature and a light sensing region formed adjacent to it have an optimized relationship for sensing light and reducing cross-talk. Another advantage of the present embodiment is that the doped isolation feature having the optimized effective implant depth that extends from the

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front side to the backside of the substrate effectively reduces cross-talk between adjacent pixels.

The present disclosure describes a method for fabricating an image sensor device, including, providing a substrate having a front side and a backside, patterning a photoresist layer on the front side of the substrate to define an opening having a first width, the photoresist layer having a first thickness correlated to the first width, performing an implantation process through the opening using an implantation energy correlated to the first thickness thereby forming a first doped isolation feature in the substrate, forming a light sensing feature adjacent to the first doped isolation feature, the light sensing feature having a second width, and thinning the substrate from the backside so that the substrate has a second thickness that does not exceed twice a depth of the first doped isolation feature. A pixel size is substantially equal to a sum of the first and second widths.

The present disclosure also describes an image sensor device, including, a substrate having a front side, a backside, and a thickness, a doped isolation feature formed in the substrate, the doped isolation feature having a first width and a depth, the depth being substantially equal to the thickness of the substrate, and a light sensing feature formed adjacent to the doped isolation feature in the substrate, the light sensing feature having a second width. The first and second widths are determined by a pixel size and an optimization algorithm. The pixel size is a sum of the first and second widths and the optimization algorithm is based on a design rule of the doped isolation feature.

The present disclosure also describes a method of fabricating an image sensor device, including, determining a relationship between an optimized substrate thickness and a pixel size, the relationship being based on a design rule of a doped isolation feature, providing a semiconductor substrate having a front side and a backside, forming a first doped isolation region in the front side of the semiconductor substrate, the first doped isolation region having a first width, forming a light-sensing element in the semiconductor substrate, the light-sensing element having a second width, and thinning-down the semiconductor substrate from the backside such that a thickness of the semiconductor substrate does not exceed the optimized substrate thickness. The pixel size substantially equals to a sum of the first and second widths.

The foregoing has outlined features of several embodiments so that those skilled in the art may better understand the detailed description that follows. Those skilled in the art should appreciate that they may readily use the present disclosure as a basis for designing or modifying other processes and structures for carrying out the same purposes and/or achieving the same advantages of the embodiments introduced herein. Those skilled in the art should also realize that such equivalent constructions do not depart from the spirit and scope of the present disclosure, and that they may make various changes, substitutions and alterations herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present disclosure. For example, the various specified values in Tables 1 and 2 for the pixel size, substrate thickness, isolation features, and other features disclosed herein are examples. However, other values may be implemented when determining the relationship between the pixel size and substrate thickness based on formation of the isolation feature.

What is claimed is:

1. An image sensor device, comprising:
a substrate having a front side, a backside, and a thickness;

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a doped isolation feature formed in the substrate, the doped isolation feature having a first width and a depth, the depth being substantially equal to the thickness of the substrate; and

a light sensing feature formed adjacent to the doped isolation feature in the substrate, the light sensing feature having a second width;

wherein the first and second widths are determined by a pixel size and an optimization ratio, wherein the pixel size is a sum of the first and second widths and the optimization ratio specifies a correlation between the first and second widths.

2. The image sensor device of claim 1, wherein the doped isolation feature includes:

a first doped isolation feature extending from the front side of the substrate to one half the thickness of the substrate; and

a second doped isolation feature extending from the backside of the substrate to the other half of the thickness of the substrate.

3. The image sensor device of claim 2, wherein the first doped isolation feature and the second doped isolation feature are at least partially aligned with each other.

4. The image sensor device of claim 1, wherein the optimization ratio is determined based on factors selected from the group consisting of: a minimum photoresist width formed by a lithography process, a minimum exposure width of the lithography process, and a minimum photoresist thickness for resisting an implantation energy that is used to form the doped isolation feature.

5. The image sensor device of claim 1, wherein the optimization ratio is expressed as the first width divided by the second width, and wherein the optimization ratio ranges from about 1.25 to about 1.85.

6. The image sensor device of claim 1, wherein the image sensor device is a backside illuminated image sensor device.

7. The image sensor device of claim 1, wherein the light sensing feature is operable to detect light projected toward the substrate from the backside.

8. The image sensor device of claim 1, wherein the light sensing feature includes a photodiode.

9. A semiconductor device, comprising:

a substrate having a front side and a back side and a thickness measured in a first direction;

a radiation-detection device formed in the substrate, the radiation-detection device being operable to detect a radiation wave that enters the substrate through the back side, the radiation-detection device having a first dimension measured in a second direction substantially perpendicular to the first direction; and

an isolation device formed in the substrate, the isolation device having a second dimension measured in the second direction and a third dimension measured in the first direction;

wherein:

the second dimension is correlated to the first dimension in a manner such that a predetermined ratio exists between the first and second dimensions; and

the third dimension is approximately equal to the thickness of the substrate.

10. The semiconductor device of claim 9, wherein the predetermined ratio is calculated at least partially in response to limitations of a lithography process used to fabricate the semiconductor device.

11. The semiconductor device of claim 9, wherein the predetermined ratio is in a range from about 1.25 to about 1.85.

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12. The semiconductor device of claim 9, wherein the predetermined ratio is approximately equal to 11/7.

13. The semiconductor device of claim 9, wherein:
the radiation-detection device includes a first region of the substrate that is doped with a first dopant;
the isolation device includes a second region of the substrate that is doped with a second dopant; and
one of the first and second dopants is an N-type dopant, and the other one is a P-type dopant.

14. The semiconductor device of claim 9, wherein the third dimension is correlated to the first and second dimensions in a positive but non-linear manner.

15. A semiconductor device, comprising:

a substrate having a front side and a back side;

a doped radiation-sensing structure formed in the substrate, the radiation-sensing structure extending from the front side toward the back side, the radiation-sensing structure being operable to sense radiation projected toward the substrate from the back side; and

an isolation structure formed in the substrate and adjacent to the radiation-sensing structure, the isolation structure including first and second isolation elements that are doped differently from the radiation-sensing element and that extend toward each other from opposite sides of the substrate;

wherein the radiation-sensing structure and the isolation structure have respective first and second lateral dimen-

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sions that are measured in a horizontal direction and mathematically correlated with each other in a manner such that a predefined ratio exists between them.

16. The semiconductor device of claim 15, wherein the predefined ratio between the first lateral dimension and the second lateral dimension is in a range from about 1.25 to about 1.85.

17. The semiconductor device of claim 15, wherein the predefined ratio between the first lateral dimension and the second lateral dimension is approximately equal to 1.57.

18. The semiconductor device of claim 15, wherein:
the substrate has a thickness and the first and second isolation elements have first and second depths, the first and second depths and the thickness all being measured in a vertical direction that is substantially perpendicular to the horizontal direction; and

the first and second depths and the thickness each have a positive and non-linear mathematical correlation with each of the first and second lateral dimensions.

19. The semiconductor device of claim 18, wherein the thickness is approximately equal to a sum of the first and second depths.

20. The semiconductor device of claim 15, wherein the first isolation element overlaps with the second isolation element by more than 0.1 microns in the horizontal direction.

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